

# PIKE PRESS

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## Jennings receives highest IDOC honor



Submitted photo Joseph Jennings, center, a correctional officer at Western Illinois Correctional Center and a native of Pittsfield, was named Correctional Officer of the Year for the Adult Division. Presenting the award are, Director S. A. "Tony" Godinez, left, and Chief of Operations Jesse Montgomery.

When Joe Jennings graduated from Pittsfield High School in 1990, he knew he wanted to go into law enforcement, like his dad – Pittsfield Chief of Police Dennis Jennings.

"I went to Western Illinois University and got a degree in law enforcement," Joe Jennings said. "Corrections was the first opportunity I had and I've been here ever since."

Jennings' loyalty and dedication to his job paid off as he was recently named Illinois Department of Corrections Correctional Officer of the Year for the entire state.

Jennings was nominated for the honor after being chosen the Correctional Officer of the Year for the Western Illinois Correctional Center in Mt. Sterling. He and the 25 other nominees from correctional facilities around the state then were in Springfield for the announcement of C.O of the Year.

"It was an honor," Jennings said.

Jennings said he is a correctional officer in the intelligence unit of the Mt. Sterling facility. "We monitor gang activity," he said. "It's up to us to see that they don't get much power."

Part of his daily duties include monitoring both incoming and outgoing inmate mail, monitoring phone calls, searches of cells if necessary and investigating and interviewing inmates.

"Every day is different," Jennings said. "It's a lot of hard work but I like the variety of it. It's stressful but rewarding."

Jennings superiors said in his nomination form that his reputation at the Intel Office is impeccable and goes well above expectations. . Jennings recently assisted the U.S. Secret Service on a case where threats were made on the U.S. President. With his assistance, a former offender has been charged and is awaiting a grand jury trial.

He also has assisted in unsolved murder cases as well as high-profile investigations. Jennings is a highly decorated officer and has received numerous commendation letters for his investigation assistance from wardens throughout the

state as well as the U.S.. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Jennings is a law enforcement liaison for the center and a tactical team member.

He has attended more than 100 hours of outside law enforcement training. Jennings has named Employee of the Month multiple times for his excellent job performance.

He and his wife and children live in Pike County.